SUFFERING AND THE WAR

SHERWOOD EDDY

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SUFFERING AND THE WAR

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BY

SHERWOOD EDDY

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The Evangelical
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TO ALL WHO SUFFER
AND TO ALL WHO MOURN;
TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR FAITH
AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR FRIENDS;
TO ALL CRIPPLED AND WOUNDED MEN
AND TO ALL LONELY WOMEN;
TO ALL PARENTS WHO KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING
FOR THE BOY WHO WILL NEVER NOW RETURN;
TO SUFFERERS IN HOSPITALS AND ALL PRISONERS OF WAR;
TO ALL WHO HAVE DIED FOR US AT THE FRONT,
AND WHO IN THE LIGHT OF HIS FACE
NOW KNOW THE MEANING OF SUFFERING;
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
IN REVERENCE AND IN LOVE.

UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE
MAR 16 1961

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I

THE FACT OF SUFFERING

SUFFERING AND THE WAR

I

THE FACT OF SUFFERING

CAN we still believe in the goodness of God? Can we still sing, "God's in His Heaven; all's right with the world"? We might have said this light-heartedly a few years ago—but "then came the war." Homes were broken, lives maimed and crippled, loved ones lost, and suffering swept over us like a flood.

Can we still believe in a God of love, our Father who is in Heaven? We look at nature, "red in tooth and claw"; we see the cyclone, the earthquake, the devastation of famine and pestilence. Then we look at man himself, born in pain, living in toil, dying in agony. We see his sickness and sorrow, hunger and thirst, disease and death—all summed up in that one dread word mortality.

Then we turn to the evils inflicted upon man by his fellow-man, upon the innocent by the guilty. We look upon human slavery and cruelty ; we see the city slum and the children of the poor, grey-blooded, gaunt-faced, pinched and poverty-stricken in body, mind and soul. We see faces bleared and swollen by drink and passion. We see the daughters of the poor with their scant living wage crowded over the precipice of virtue and falling an easy prey to the lusts of men. We look upon a world that cries aloud from social injustice. We see class prejudice, hatred and suspicion, the wasted lives alike of the idle rich and the impoverished poor.

After twenty centuries of our boasted civilization and progress, we look abroad upon a world rent with international jealousy and hatred, and devastated by the horrors of war. We have vaunted our modern science and have discovered the chemical secrets of nature only to loose the blasting forces of destruction on the land, in the sky and under the sea. And after all our talk of peace, the " Christian " nations have plunged into war, with a daily attrition since war was declared of more than twenty-five thousand killed, wounded or prisoners ; and are burning up some twenty million pounds sterling a day, or more than twenty thousand pounds every minute during

the twelve hours of the day that God's sun shines upon us. While among the neutral nations we see materialism more rampant than among the nations disciplined by the suffering of war.

In the face of such a spectacle, can we still believe that the universe is friendly, and that God is our Father? Can we still hold that "all things work together for good"? For we have to face not only such facts as we have outlined, but also the problems raised by these facts. There are all the young lives, bright with promise, cut off before their prime; there are men maimed and crippled, left, after the enthusiasm of the war has passed and the sympathy of friends and fellow sufferers is removed, to face the unequal battle of life alone; there are the lonely lives of those bereaved at home to plod on to the end of the long, long trail that stretches ahead, so terribly alone when no one seems to care, to understand or to sympathize. And there are all the problems, social, national and international, raised by the war itself.

In other words, it is the problem of evil that presses upon us with its crushing weight, which has always been the hardest question man has had to face and the heaviest burden he has had to bear. Whether or not we can discover any purpose or

possible good in suffering, whether or not we may find a philosophy of suffering, or solve the problems raised by the war, we must all admit the bare, gaunt *fact* of suffering. And this fact we must now face.

II

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

II

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

THE fact of suffering no one can deny. It is unavoidable and unescapable, but has it any purpose? Has life under such conditions any meaning? The very magnitude of human suffering would seem to indicate that if life means anything, it must mean something very intensely. On the very face of it, the fact of human suffering is so widespread and so staggering, and this present world is so unjust, so unsatisfying, that it would seem that this life cannot be intended primarily as a place for pleasure or as an end in itself of satisfying happiness, but must have some longer and larger purpose.

Perhaps it is not meant for pleasure, but for character; not for ease, but for discipline; not primarily for the temporal, but for the eternal; not as a complete and satisfying whole here on earth, but the beginning of a larger life of infinite worth and meaning and joy. Has suffering then any possible contribution to this larger whole? Is there

a purpose in pain? Had Shakespeare, that great master of human experience, fathomed something of its significance when he wrote, "Sweet are the uses of adversity"?

A patient and impartial study of the facts of life would seem to show that at least some suffering has proved beneficial, has been turned from an evil into man's good, and from apparent defeat into permanent victory. A study of the facts of life seems to indicate at least three possible uses of adversity or purposes of pain. Suffering may be either *disciplinary*, *remedial* or *redemptive*. And we shall find also that it is temporary and often *removable*.

Some suffering has proved in practice to be disciplinary, as a warning or incentive for man's development. Some suffering is remedial, and as a result of man's own sin, has in time saved him from the very sin itself. While some suffering is redemptive, and may be vicariously borne for man's glory and the making of a better world.

1. Can it be denied, in view of the actual facts, that some suffering is *disciplinary*, and has often proved to be a warning or a stimulus to man for his development? Has not pain proved to be a great instrument of human progress? Has not suffering been a strict but kindly schoolmaster for man's

instruction ? First of all, pain has developed man's body and its faculties. Scientists have shown that out of conflict and suffering almost every attribute of form, of colour and of strength, of courage, of beauty and of nobility, have been evolved. Darwin, in the closing words of his great work, " The Origin of Species," says : " Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object directly follows," that is, the development of man's higher life.

The five senses, evolving from the primary sense of touch, have all been developed by pain. Indeed, happiness begins with sensitiveness ; and capacity for pain ranks the creature in the scale of being. It was first pain that taught man the oft-repeated lesson that fire burns. But out of the pain man has learned his lesson and has used the fire to warm himself in the bitter cold, to cook his food, to drive his engines, to forge his iron and steel, to build his bridges, railways and ships. Through pain he first learned the law of gravity, and falls bruised to the earth. But he rises to conquer, and when he has learned the law, he may hitch his chariot to the stars, he may use the power of gravity to bear his burdens, he may harness the cataract and the water-fall, and the force which in his ignorance once

crushed him to the earth now lifts him to the sky. It was there all the time for his instruction and his help, and he is blessed alike in the pain of his lesson-learning and the power of his mastery.

Pain has developed man's mind, as well as his body. Physical evil has often proved a divine stimulus to invention. Primitive man cowered terrified before the lightning. Painfully he learns its laws, until in time he makes it carry his messages, flash his thought over continents and under oceans, turn his wheels of power, master his world, and minister to his needs. One man suffers from smallpox, but another discovers the vaccine which will cure it. Cholera devastates a congested Oriental community, but the scourge drives man to make his cities sanitary. Scientists have discovered that without the bacteria and microbes which consume waste matter, life would die out upon our planet, and that an apparently unmitigated evil may yet minister to man's need.

Pain had developed man's moral and spiritual nature even more manifestly than it has developed his body and mind. Through suffering rightly borne we become strong ourselves, and tender and sympathetic towards others. The greatest helpers of

humanity have been its cross bearers ; the leaders of men have suffered in loneliness ; the prophets have learned their lessons in the school of pain. The corals in the sheltered lagoon grow rank and useless ; those that are broken and crushed by the surf form the living rock and the foundations of continents. The savage that sleeps in the sun, the lotus eaters who dream in selfish pleasure, have never been the benefactors of the race. Ease has not produced greatness. Men who have had to struggle with an unfavourable environment, to fight the cold, to buffet the storm, to blast the rock or wring a livelihood from a niggardly soil, have won character by their pains.

The Pilgrim Puritans on a stern and rock-bound coast won from the unfriendly soil of New England more of granite character than did the followers of Cortez amid the jewels and silver and gold of Mexico. The bird rises against a strong head wind, not only in spite of the wind, but because of it. The opposing force becomes a lifting power if faced at the right angle. All opposing forces overcome, become means of conquest, of character, of progress. The stars shine out by night, which are unseen and unnoticed by day. The shining hopes of humanity break forth in the darkness of adversity to lighten

man's pathway to the eternal. And faith grows clear as sight grows dim.

The storm may buffet ships and rend the rigging, but it makes strong hands and brave hearts. Oh, fellow voyager, amid the storms and calms of life's wide sea, "spread thy sails to catch the favouring breezes of adversity." If the greatest character of all time, even He who was the very touchstone of destiny, could be made perfect only through suffering, is it not probable that you and I must be also?

George Matheson, the blind preacher and poet, upon receiving his sentence of a life that must close in physical darkness, and after being rejected in consequence of his coming blindness by the one whom he loved, learned the great lesson of all suffering, and wrote the lines which still bring us light in our hours of darkness:

"O Love, that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Light, that followest all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrow'd ray,
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy, that seekest me thro' pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee ;
I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee ;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

In the light of such experiences, we stand humbled before the thousands who have suffered and who have emerged out of the furnace of affliction as gold that has been tried by fire. Can we not then agree on this first possible purpose of pain—that *some* suffering has been beneficial for man's discipline, for warning or instruction, and that pain has developed man's bodily faculties, man's mind, and man's moral character ?

2. In the second place, is it not evident that some suffering is *remedial*, the result of our sin and wrong doing, and that when rightly borne often it has been the means of purging man from sin and purifying character ? Sin is usually some form of selfishness. It is the assertion of our lower self-life against our own conscience, against the welfare of our fellow-men and against God. It is a disease,

which is only a lower parasitic form of life thriving at the expense of our higher or normal life.

Sin breaks athwart the moral order of the world. There is one law of righteousness inherent in the heart of God and the conscience of man, and when that law is broken it entails inevitable suffering. For sin and suffering and death are riveted together in the world's moral order. Even Plato had already discovered that "we cannot get rid of sin without pain." Huxley says: "The absolute justness of the system of things is as clear to me as any scientific fact. The gravitation of sin to sorrow is as certain as that of the earth to the sun, and more so." All sin results in suffering or loss to someone, but this suffering or judgment for sin is not vindictive, but remedial. It is not sent by an angry God to punish, but is permitted by a loving Father to recall us to our higher selves. Pain is thus a danger-signal of sin, which expresses God's disapproval of it, and nature's condemnation to enforce the still small voice of conscience which may have been unheeded or stifled.

When it has been rightly received, men have learned the lesson of suffering for sin and have been blessed by it. Long centuries before the Christian era the Psalmist wrote: "It is good for me that I

have been afflicted." St. Augustine, in the fourth century, in mental anguish for his life of passion and profligacy, learns the lesson of suffering, and gives us his "Confessions." This slave of passion becomes the great preacher and writer, the great bishop and Church Father. In the twelfth century, Francis of Assisi learns in sickness, caused by his own sinful living, to turn from sin to God. He gathers twelve young men about him and goes out in poverty, in joy and in song, as all Italy turns to him, and the nation to a higher life. Ignatius Loyola, wounded after a battle, turns on his bed of pain to a copy of the life of Christ which was beside him. He rises to leave behind his old life of cursing, gambling, drinking and lust; and after a night of vigil, lays his sword and dagger upon the altar, and goes out with Xavier and five young men to call Southern Europe and Southern Asia to God.

If then you and I are called sometimes to suffer for our own sins, may we not learn from those who have not allowed themselves to be embittered, but rather ennobled and purified by their suffering, and rise on the stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things? And may we not then agree on this second point, that *some* suffering is the

result of our own sin and may be a means of blessing?

3. Finally, some suffering is *redemptive*, and may be vicariously borne for man's good and man's glory. For the great example of vicarious suffering, we turn to the central figure of all history, and in the cross of Christ we find the final answer to the problem of suffering, and its ultimate purpose. The death of Jesus Christ does not stand as an accidental, isolated, unrelated event. Here there seems to be gathered up the whole might and meaning of the great facts of sin, of suffering and of death.

In the light of His cross, we see human sin carried to its last limits and its ultimate conclusion. We see evil rejecting goodness, hate rejecting love, man rejecting God. And here we see the worst that death can do, in cutting off the one life that held the world's hope.

Here was the deepest wrong that history records or that the mind can conceive, the greatest miscarriage of justice, the greatest apparent triumph of evil over good, of might over right, of shame over glory. And if, out of this one greatest wrong, out of this darkness and desolation and death, God could bring life and immortality to light, then out of *any*

suffering, out of any evil, out of any death, God can bring ultimate good.

> " Oh, love of God ! Oh, sin of man,
> In this dread hour your strength is tried,
> And victory remains with love :
> Jesus our Lord is crucified."

It seemed an hour of impenetrable darkness and despair *then ;* but as we look back upon it now it shines with the glory and radiance of eternity. Herein it is a parable of all suffering. Some day we'll understand.

> " God nothing does, nor suffers to be done,
> But what we would ourselves, could we but see
> Through all the events of things as well as He."

Your sorrow seems dark and unbounded now. Perhaps you do not see its end or object ; but think how dark that hour was to the world. The one life that held the hope of humanity was to be cut off. In the darkness of the garden He wrestles alone ; for of the twelve who were His friends, one had gone out to deny Him, one to betray Him, and the other ten to forsake Him and flee. Up that long and lonely hill He bears His cross. He who had given the world nothing but love, who had healed the sick, ministered to the poor, touched the leper and laid His hands upon the heads of little children, was spit upon, scourged to exhaustion, crowned with

thorns, nailed to a cross of shame. He had come to save the world, and now they were putting Him to death. Innocent Himself, He had to bear suffering and death for the sins of man.

No other soul had ever such capacity for suffering. The path which you and I have to tread is not so lonely now, for He has trodden it before us. There is no sorrow or suffering which He does not know and feel. In anguish of heart, He cried: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." And yet, are we not glad that it did not pass? Was it not for man's glory and for man's good that He accepted that cup?

Ah, here was suffering borne for man's glory; but so may our suffering be. You and I also have a cross—not a jewelled symbol to wear as an ornament—but the rugged cross of bitter reality, and God knows it is heavy. You say it is unjust, so was His; you say you did not deserve it, did He? You have prayed for escape, so also did He. For herein is its highest glory, that it is a vicarious cross, and herein we share His glory and come to our highest estate. "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf."

Everyone down all the centuries who has borne

His cross, has shared in His glory. It was suffering that turned the hard ambition of a Saul into the might and majesty and tenderness of the apostle Paul. See him in his hour of darkness. He is alone, imprisoned, deserted, crushed. He whose flaming spirit would be abroad in the world, who was ambitious to press on to Spain, sits chained to a Roman soldier. You can hear the clank of his chain in almost every later epistle, as he writes with dim eyesight and trembling hand: "Remember my bonds"; "an ambassador in chains." But if he had not suffered, we should never have had those great epistles of the imprisonment, the deepest, the tenderest letters ever penned for the blessing of man. If he had not been weak, God's strength would not have been perfected in him. If he had not been lonely, he would never have found to the full the fellowship of God. Instead of chafing at his chains and worrying about Spain, he wins his Roman soldier. Instead of preaching as he had wished, he does the best he can and writes a few feeble letters on perishable papyrus, too poor even to afford a piece of parchment. Oh, precious letters, filled with the very comfort and love of God, wherein the light of heaven breaks from the damp and darkness of that earthly prison!

May *we* not miss the meaning of suffering, nor fail to find the purpose of pain. For to us it hath been granted to suffer with Him, that we may "fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ," the "unpaid balance" in the discharge of our debt of love in human service. It is ours to share in the glory of His cross and in the very fellowship of His sufferings. To-day God calls us into the very holy of holies of human life,—the place of suffering.

Ah, friend, it may be hard to see it now, hard to understand it now, hard to bear it now, but some day we'll understand. Can we not agree for the present that *some* suffering has proved to be for man's discipline and instruction, and has in fact developed man's body, mind and moral character? Can we not agree that *some* suffering is the result of man's own sin and has been the means of man's salvation; but that the highest suffering of all may be vicariously borne for man's glory?

"Know, fellow mourners, be our lot too grievous,
That He who sealed our symbol with His blood,
Vouchsafes the vision that shall never leave us,
Those humble crosses in the Flanders mud.

Nor think there lies unheeded in the grave
A life given freely for the world He died to save,
For far ahead, dim tramping generations
That never knew and cannot guess our pain,

(Though history counts nothing less than nations
And fame forgets when grass has grown again,)
Shall yet remember that the world is free !
It is enough,
For this is immortality."

Although some suffering may be vicariously borne as man's highest glory, it is equally true that some suffering is removable for man's good. It is the greatest mistake in the world to suppose that God sends all trouble, that every dark disaster is "an act of God," or that God sends death and destruction as a judgment. Rather, "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." Most of man's sorrow and suffering comes directly or indirectly from his own self-will, or from his wrong attitude to life.

We spoke of the suffering of slavery, of the injustice of the city slum and of the devastation of war. But who made slavery and the slum and the war ? God made man free, but men have enslaved one another. It is not God, but man who makes the city slum. It was not God, but the blindness and greed of selfish men that made the war. It was not God, but man who forged and fired the weapon, and slew the one you loved.

There is much evil in the world that cannot be explained away, but it can be driven away. It

can be removed, not by philosophy, but by loving labour and sacrifice.

Many have spent more time in discussing the problem of evil than in trying to solve it; more energy in speculating how we got into the pit of human woe, than in struggling to get out of it. The world as it stands is obviously wrong, and we have undeniably done much to make it so, but the few who fight the wrong and suffer with those who have done it, are those who are helping to right it. It is not the cruelty of nature, but wrong wills that blight human hearts and hopes.

Examination may prove that so far as it is God's world, it is good, or the best for the making of good; so far as it is really bad, man has made it so. It is true that an unjust social order crushes many an individual, who has never had a fair chance to rise. But, broadly speaking, for good or ill, we make our own world. Ultimately, life is determined not by surroundings, but by our attitude toward them. Happiness is inward, not outward. It is made, not by circumstances, but by character, not by feelings, but by faith.

The war does not prove that righteousness has failed or that God is not good. Almost every great evil has ended in a final and

terrible outburst of that evil. Slavery was once justified as a divine institution. Then God was charged with it. Later His power was invoked to remove it. Must we not in the same way remove the evils of our social order and the horrors of war? Let us not say that because of the war Christianity has failed. It cannot have failed if it has never yet fairly been tried. Has civilization also failed? Has education failed, has social democracy failed? Rather, we have failed to apply them.

There can be a "problem of evil" only in a world that is prevailingly good. There is no problem of good, for the world is not prevailingly bad. There is discord only in prevailing harmony, and wrong only where there is a law of right. It is a brave world for those who take it bravely, and a good world for those who take it or make it so.

We repeat that all suffering is temporary and much of it is *removable*. Let us not assume that all the woes and ills of human life are intended to be accepted with complacency. Many of them were never sent by God and were never intended to be borne by man. When the disciples asked Jesus concerning the blind man, "Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" He replied: "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents,

but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." The highest good of the man and the glory of God were found only in the removal of the evil.

How much evil there is in the world around us that could be removed and should be removed! By God's help it shall be removed when we have the vision, the faith and the courage to rise and smite it. Let us not blame God with the outbreak of immorality during the war, with the curse of drink, with the wrongs of our unrighted social order, or with the cruelties of human hate. God's or man's, the world is not yet finished. It is open for a fighting faith. We still hold with the familiar words of Tennyson:

> "Oh yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
> That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void."

If, now, we agree that much of human suffering is man-made and unnecessary, and that it can and should be removed, is it not then true that we have compassed all the kinds of suffering that there are? Is not all suffering either disciplinary for man's development, remedial for his reform, redemptive

and vicarious for the saving of the race, or removable for man's good? As you think them over, is not each one of these an evil which may be turned into good? Is not all pain potentially redemptive? Is not all suffering remedial and not vindictive, all sorrow the raw material of joy?

If you are facing the problem of suffering in your own life, ask yourself, first of all, whether your suffering at present is removable, or something which must be borne. If the latter, is it a possible discipline for your development, a remedy for your reform, or a vicarious burden caused by others but which may be borne, not only for your own blessing, but for the blessing of others? What you cannot change you can conquer if you accept it aright. As we shall see, your suffering may yet prove to be the greatest blessing that has ever entered your life.

III

THE RESULT OF SUFFERING

III

THE RESULT OF SUFFERING

MAY it not help us to believe that there are at least these three possible purposes of suffering if we find them *actually fulfilled* in human life? Take up at random almost any great biography, and do you not find one or more of these results of suffering? Has not suffering in human life rightly borne actually resulted in discipline, in reform, or in the greater glory of vicarious sacrifice for the saving of others?

Socrates calmly takes his cup of hemlock, with the words, "You, my judges, go home to your banquets, I to the hemlock and death; but whether it is better for you or me, God knoweth"—and *we* know now. Would you not choose Socrates' cup of sorrow, rather than his judges' banquets of pleasure? If so, you choose for eternity against time, and for character against ease.

Had not Epictetus been lame and a slave, many

could never have walked so firmly, nor with so stout a heart against the ills of life. Had Dante not suffered, we would never have had "The Divine Comedy." Had Milton not been blind, neither he nor we could have seen so clearly, and he could never have written: "My vision Thou hast dimmed, that I may see Thyself, Thyself alone." Out of blindness, he learns the lesson so needed to-day by those cut off from an active life, that "they also serve who only stand and wait."

If Augustine had not suffered, we should never have had his "Confessions." If Bunyan had not lain for twelve years in Bedford jail, millions would have missed his "Pilgrim's Progress." Indeed, it was to turn the evil of his prison into good, as he says, "to divert myself from baser thoughts," that he wrote this book. If Tennyson had not lost his friend Hallam, we should never have had his "In Memoriam." And with him now we face our doubts and gather strength.

Suffering is linked with joy for those who take it aright. "If you suffer without succeeding it is that some one else may succeed. If you succeed without suffering, it is because some one else has suffered."

Shelley sums up the experience of sufferers when he says :

" Most miserable men are cradled into poetry by wrong ;
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

While Newman says :

" I would not miss one sigh or tear,
Heart throb or burning brow ;
Sweet was Thy chastisement severe,
And sweet the memory now."

As you think of all the noble army of martyrs, is there one who has not suffered ? Can you have a victory without a battle, character without conflict, perfect love without suffering ? The world's greatest benefactors have been the most persecuted. Telemachus springs into the arena in protest against the gladiatorial games ; but his death rouses the conscience of Rome to abolish this brutal wrong. Savonarola suffers for the liberty of Florence ; Huss burns for Bohemia ; Latimer and Ridley for England ; Livingstone lays down his life for Africa ; Father Damien, that he may save the lepers, becomes himself a leper.

In the light of eternity, who are those that shall stand before the throne arrayed in white robes ? Are they those who have come out of ease and pleasure, out of untroubled calm and unbroken

human relationships? Nay, rather they are those who have come out of great tribulation and who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of sacrifice. "For without the shedding of blood there was no freeing of slaves, no liberation of serfs, no liberty of thought or speech, no remission of human sin."

As we pass the pearl fisheries in Southern Asia, we find that the life without a pain leaves no pearl; that the life lived in sluggish ease, unwounded, without suffering or long continued friction, forms no jewel. And as we pass the dwellings of men, we find that without suffering, the pearl of great price, the highest human character, is not formed.

Scientists tell us that the music of the birds began in fear and pain. History tells us that the charters of the world's liberties are written in blood. To-day men are dying for us, that we may live. May we not see in the lives of others, and realize in our own lives, the possible results of suffering; for discipline, for reform and for the glory of vicarious sacrifice?

IV

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SUFFERING

IV

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SUFFERING

MEN ask, "How can you account for this terrible war in this supposedly civilized and Christian era? Why should there not be a world without bloodshed and cruelty, fear and pain? Why should there not be character without suffering, and good without evil?"

Human life is lived upon two planes, a lower and a higher. There is the lower plane of the material, and the higher plane of the spiritual. On the lower plane there is the grim struggle for life, on the higher the struggle for the life of others. On the lower, is the fight for the survival of the fittest, on the higher, the fight to make men fit to survive. There is the lower plane of selfishness, and the higher plane of service. There is nature "red in tooth and claw" and the red battlefields of the enemy, and there is the cross, red in sacrifice of life laid down in the service of others. There is the lower plane of pleasure, and the higher plane

of character. There is the lower life for mammon, and the higher life for God.

What then was it that caused the war? Whatever may have been the occasion of the war, whatever nation or group of men may have been chiefly to blame for starting the war, its ultimate cause lay in the lives of men living on the lower material plane of selfishness, instead of on the higher spiritual plane of service. Its cause was the materialism of a world that had forgotten God.

We speak of militarism. But what is militarism, save armed materialism, which lies behind. And what is materialism, but organised selfishness. And selfishness is the danger of every individual life and the downpull of every man toward the lower plane of the material. Every man who yields to the lower life of material selfishness is harbouring the enemy in his heart. He who lives the selfish life, whatever uniform he may wear, is the enemy of his nation, of the world and of his own highest good.

Two great facts emerge out of this war: on the one hand, the undeniable fact of human sin, and the suffering and death which it entails; and on the other hand, the eternal fact of God, the only source and satisfaction of man's life. The war

has shaken to its crumbling foundations the material basis of life. Material defences, whether of concrete or steel, of forts or battleships, have been shaken. Material wealth has gone up in smoke. The material body, with all its boasted strength, has been mangled or blown to atoms. Materialistic science, as a cynical, self-sufficient explanation of human life, has been shaken or proved inadequate. It has harnessed the earthquake and the cyclone, only to blast human hopes and hearts and homes. Material pleasure and passion, sordid selfishness and sin, have been shaken, and over man's material life has been written in the flaming judgment of war, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

But the whole spiritual or higher plane of life remains unshaken. The eternal God remains, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Christ remains, the central fact of human history. Character remains, our abiding possession. Eternity remains, and we are held by the power of an endless life. The whole spiritual Kingdom of God remains and grows, embracing all the good, the true and the beautiful. Every spiritual and personal relationship abides; every man whose life is grounded and rooted in God, remains, so that we may say with the writer of old,

"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have thankfulness, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God."

The cause of the war was materialism; the cause of human conflict, human sin and most human suffering, is the selfishness of lives lived without God. But why, we have asked, could there not be a world without sin and good without evil? We are agreed that the full development of personality, the production of moral character, is the great thing in human life. At all costs we must have character. But what are *the conditions of moral character* and of the highest development of human life? Are there not at least four? *Human freedom, a society of human relationships, a world of law and order, and an imperfect developing environment,* involving struggle and the overcoming of resistance, would seem to be necessary prerequisites for the development of moral character. Does not each of the four involve the possibility of suffering and even of sin? Yet may they not all work together ultimately for man's good?

1. The first prerequisite of moral character is *freedom* and the power of accomplishment. If you had the power to create automatic machines or free moral agents, which would you choose? Every man with

a family, or the hope of having one, faces the same problem and shares, in some small part, the same responsibility with God. If you had your choice between a perfect phonograph and a child, free but fallible, which would you choose ? The phonograph will never make a mistake ; it will receive whatever impression you wish, and echo every word that you speak into it. Your child will make mistakes and will fall many times, but your child has a mind and a heart and a will. In spite of and beyond all of his mistakes, a free son will be better than an infallible phonograph. That is God's faith in man.

Freedom is a precious, an inalienable human right. What have men been fighting for in this war ? Not land or money, not hate or glory ; but for freedom, the crown of all character. If the enemy offered to pave your streets with gold, with the promise of a science that could obviate all sickness and suffering, but at the price of enslaving your sons, would you choose the ease of slavery or the suffering of freedom ? Would you rather be a contented pig in a golden sty, or a suffering man, struggling for character, fighting for his nation, sacrificing for humanity, with the power of an endless life ? Would your choice lie with the unequal strife of the brave Greeks of old as they ran down the plains of Mara-

51.29²

thon with the shout of freedom, or with the drunken revelry of the enslaved Persians? Would you choose to follow Leonidas and the Spartan heroes, dying for Greek freedom, or be surfeited in Xerxes' tents of luxury? Do you glory in a Belgium, rich with a Leopold's spoils of an enslaved Congo, or in a Belgium stretched on a cross of suffering for Europe's freedom? And if you glory in the fight for freedom in the past, will you not accept your own cross of suffering now in the present?

2. The second condition of moral character is that of *human relationship*, human fellowship and co-operation; of a society bound together in families, in communities, in nations. We are members one of another. This close and sacred relationship implies that we can both help and hinder our fellowmen. You say: "Why should the innocent suffer for the guilty? Why should children bear the effects of their father's sin? Why should I suffer when some one else sins?" But even if you could, would you choose to stand alone, severed from all human relationships which entail suffering? Do you not see that it would sever you also from all human help? What is life itself but the sum total of personal relationships, human and divine? And every such relationship involves the possibility of

suffering. Cut off the possibility of one man influencing another for evil, and you thereby cut off the possibility of all influence for good, of all human friendship, sympathy, sacrifice and love.

The suffering involved in human relationship is temporal; joy is eternal. Death is for a moment; life is everlasting. Love and every true human relationship will last forever. Every broken tie may be united in God and the loved one lost in death may be found in life. There is no proportion between the shortness of earthly suffering and the infinite reaches of lasting life, "For our light affliction which is for the moment, wörketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."

3. The third condition of moral character is *a sphere of law, a world of order*, on which we may rely. No character would be possible in a world of caprice and chance. If fire did not always burn, if the law of gravitation did not always hold good, we could have no time-tables for our railways, no reliance upon nature or man. But if fire always burns, it may burn us when we get in its way. If the law of gravitation always holds good, we shall get hurt if we fall. Law involves suffering, but it is the ground of character.

4. As a fourth condition for developing character, an imperfect man needs the stimulus and discipline of an unperfected, *developing environment*, a world of struggle and resistance; obstacles to be overcome, battles to be won, baffling problems to be solved. He needs, not a soft world of ease to lull him to sleep, but a changing environment of action and reaction, cold and heat, summer and winter, sunshine and shadow, light and darkness, pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity.

As Dr. Hillis says: "He who would ask release from suffering would take the winter out of the seasons, the glory of the night out of the round of day, the cloud and rainstorms out of the summer; would expel the furrows from the face of Lincoln; would rob Socrates of his dignity and majesty; would make St. Paul a mere æsthetic feebling; would steal the sweetness from maternity; would rob the Divine Sufferer of His sanctity, and would turn the throne of God into a throne of iron."

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pain;
Dare, never grudge the throe!"

If, now, we agree that the necessary prerequisites of moral character are : a measure of human freedom, a society of human relationships, a world of law and order, and an imperfect, developing environment, we find upon examination that every one of these necessary conditions of moral character implies the possibility of suffering and the possibility of sin ; yet they may all work together for the good of man.

You say, " What a sad and sorry world it is, and what a different world we would make if we could start all over again." But are you so sure ? Very well, let us in thought start afresh, and with Omar shatter to bits this sorry scheme of things entire, and then remould it nearer to our heart's desire. Just what kind of a world would you make ? At the very outset you are faced with the necessity of the four great principles which are the conditions of moral character outlined above, or their alternatives.

First of all, would you, if you had your way, make the world fated or free ? In a world without freedom, driven by dumb necessity and blind fate, how could you produce real moral character ? If on the other hand you allow man freedom to do right or wrong and make mistakes, how are you

going to eliminate suffering? Well, as between a fated world and character, we must choose character and permit a little suffering in our world.

But take the second alternative. Would you have a world of close human relationships, or have each individual absolutely isolated, where no one could possibly cause him to suffer, and therefore where no one could possibly render him real help? Would you not choose the joyous love and suffering of human relationship to the cold isolation and exile of living death?

Again, would you make a reliable world of law and order, or a world of endless miracle and interference for each individual every time he is in danger of suffering? If you choose the latter you would create a chaos and not a cosmos, a multiverse and not a universe, the insanity of lawlessness instead of the reliability of a world of science where the almanac, the calendar and the time-table are possible.

And lastly, would you make the natural environment rough or smooth, hard or easy, painful or painless? Supposing you choose the latter, and supposing your free man is selfish, living in wealthy ease, oppressing his poorer brethren in the slums, unconsciously committing moral suicide himself and

homicide against his brother ; how, apart from the suffering and tragedy of life, to stab him wide awake and warn him, are you going to change him or make him help his poorer brother ? In an evolving world, where the ultimate object is the development of free moral character for eternal happiness and usefulness, what principle or law can you lay down that does not involve suffering, provided you make man a free moral agent ?

We say that we would have made the world different, but when we write our own novels and mould life according to our own wish, what kind of stories do we write and what dreams do we dream ? Are we interested in books where all is smooth and soft, in an untroubled Eden, or do we create difficulties to be overcome, hard battles to be fought and won, with a villain in the plot and a hero who wins and triumphs out of suffering ? The heroes who hold us in fiction, the men who compel our admiration in history, and the leaders whom we are most ready to follow in the life of to-day, are the great moral characters that have triumphed in suffering. The very games we invent for our own pleasure are systems of obstacles to be overcome, or the taxing of muscle and brain in strenuous human competition.

What then is the necessity of suffering? Given a life with some measure of freedom, of close human relationships, a world of natural law and order, and an imperfect, developing environment, and you have the inevitable result of suffering as a temporary, necessary evil, which is but a means to the greater good.

In a sinful world man must suffer; but why should there be a sinful world? Because man is free, and if free to make mistakes, then fated for a little while to suffer, that in the long last, suffering may be swallowed up in eternal joy. Thus the writer of "The Church's One Foundation," suffering in dark hours of pain from the incurable disease of cancer, cries in triumphant faith:

> "'Tis peace in pain, to know that pain
> Secured us pain's eternal end.
> Ah me, what blest exchange for pain,
> If I attain, if I attain!"

President H. C. King writes, "Through the centuries have been developed four common views of suffering, each of which has some aid to give in the solution of the problem of evil. These four views are all represented in the Book of Job: that suffering is the punishment, or direct consequence of sin; that it is present in life for the sake of discipline or chastening; that without it real

virtue would hardly be possible to men ; that there is no answer to the problem of suffering but the majesty of God. All four have elements of truth and genuine help ; at some points they strike deeply into the heart of this difficult problem ; and taken together they are a worthy result of the travail of men's souls through the centuries over this dark problem."

It must be frankly confessed, however, that these four answers taken separately, or even together, do not furnish an adequate philosophy of suffering. The problem of evil still remains unsolved.[1] We still know only in part, and, therefore, we still see life in imperfect perspective. There is indeed no final or adequate philosophy of suffering that has been evolved by man, but there is the Christian answer to this problem, which, while it does not furnish an abstract philosophy, does afford firm footing for faith, a ground for hope, and the bed-rock of a satisfying human experience.

To the four previous answers to the problem of suffering, we can add a fifth, the answer of the cross of Christ. Here we see the uttermost climax of suffering achieving man's redemption, the deepest wrong made to right the world, the greatest shame

[1] Those who have intellectual difficulties will find this point more fully covered in Dr. Sherwood Eddy's book on "The Faith of Honest Doubt," published by Longmans, Green and Co., price 3d.

and injustice made man's highest glory, the darkest despair made humanity's hope. That vicarious suffering was for us. The life Christ lived reveals the changeless life of God; and in the cross we see the very heart of God. What Christ was, God is. What Christ bore, God has been bearing from the foundation of the world. Love, in essence, is self-giving, and love must suffer and sacrifice while the loved one sins and suffers. A suffering Christ means a suffering God; yet a God who sees the end from the beginning, knows the ultimate triumph of goodness, sees life beyond death, joy beyond pain, and character beyond suffering, sees the reuniting of broken human relationships and the fruition of lost human hopes. He is a Father who knows, who cares, who feels, who suffers in us and for us and with us, every long day and lonely hour as we grope in the shadows here below. He marks the sparrow's fall and numbers the very hairs of our head.

> "For the loving worm within its clod,
> Were diviner than a loveless God."

Thus David, suffering for Saul, learns the great lesson of the love of a suffering God:

> "Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst *thou*—
> So *wilt* thou!
> He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! My flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it! O, Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever! A Hand like this hand
Shall open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

As much suffering as there is in the world is also in the heart of God. All we suffer, the Father's heart feels. Nature is the revealed thought of God. Man is a yet higher revelation of His love. All true human love springs from His heart. All the mother's love for her child, the price of pain she pays in travail at its birth, her anguish at its sin or suffering, is but a dim reflection of the love of God for this same child. All the devoted and self-sacrificing love of a wife for her husband, a love that would die to make sure of his love in return; all this is but a little human cupful of the infinite ocean of God's love for you. For "God *is* love." As nature and man reveal God in part, Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of the very heart of God. And the cross of Christ is the last word of that revelation. All that was in Christ in that hour, is eternal in the heart of God. The uttermost of human love is shown in that cross, and all that

perfect and sacrificial love flows for you at this hour from the very heart of God. And so we trust, " that God is love indeed, and love creation's final law."

If God might have made a better world and could not, He would not be all-powerful. If God could have made a better world and would not, He would not be all-loving. Presumably then, this is the best of worlds for the ultimate development of character and happiness. If we look at Nature, we see that God *could* do anything He would. If we look at the cross of Christ, we see that He *would* do anything He could. If we look at the characters of men that have followed the Crucified and triumphed in suffering, and at the ethical trend of the universe, we believe that He will do the best for all in the end.

But the world can only be fairly judged in the light of the completed whole. We see as yet only the wrong side of the pattern, and even that still incomplete. We see but a fraction in space and time ; only an infinitesimal part of the painful and plodding means, " a labour working to an end," but not the end itself. Anything may be rightly judged only in the light of its end, and we see not yet the end, either of the developing individual or of an evolving world. Since we cannot prove, or disprove, what can we do, but the one grandest thing that

man can ever do, trust and labour to the same great end, as fellow-workers with God ?

The private in the trenches may not understand the plan of the whole campaign. While he is hard pressed or even driven to temporary retreat, he cannot see the whole sweep of victory of the advancing lines, but he is glad to know that at headquarters someone understands. And in the suffering of life we are glad to know that there is One who understands, and who cares ; One who feels, because He has suffered, and One who will yet turn our suffering to joy, because He suffers with us even now. " Underneath are the everlasting arms."

> " And I smiled to think God's greatness
> Flowed round our incompleteness ;
> Round our restlessness His rest."

Pain is the danger-signal of life. Life is correspondence with environment. Joy is found in the harmonious exercise of function, or the full correspondence with environment. Death is the complete or final severance from environment. Pain is the warning of a wrong relation, or a partial break with our environment. It prompts man to seek to heal the breach, to bridge the gulf of separation ; that he may be reunited with his satisfying environment, or with the personality from whom he is

separated. The atonement of the cross is God's effort to be reunited with man. The surrender of faith is man's response by which he seeks reunion with the true environment of the soul, which is God. Pain, while a warning of possible death, is a promise of reunited life, when the disciplined soul will find again in God the eternal realities of life, in the presence of the loved ones lost.

A perfect and final philosophy of suffering would obviate the necessity for faith, and eliminate the blessing of its discipline. Faith is but the intuition of a solution. It is but the skirmish line of knowledge. But it is the maker of character. To judge suffering, we must take the whole of life in perspective, the life of the individual and of the race, the life of the present and of the future. In the tangled web of life, an isolated case of suffering may seem unjust to the individual in the present, but it may work together for the good of all in the future. The misunderstanding of the meaning of suffering has usually been caused by a limited or short-sighted view, which confines itself to the present or to the individual. Rightly understood, it is man's highest glory, the measure of life's meaning and worth, the promise of a better life beyond.

Recalling then the purposes of suffering, as

disciplinary, remedial or redemptive, and recognizing our duty to fight against and remove every man-made and unnecessary evil, cannot the man of faith accept this as the Christian philosophy of suffering: "We know that *to them that love* God *all* things work together for good, even to them that are called *according to His purpose*"?[1] It is all things that work together for good, either in the bearing or the removing of them, and not some things only; it covers the whole of life, every circumstance, every sorrow, every separation and every limitation. It includes you and your sorrow.

But although it includes "all things," it is not for all persons, but "to them that love God." It does not mean that God is not loving, and longing to work all things together for the good of all. But human freedom is a very real fact, and human sin is the rebellion of a free will against the sovereignty of God. As long as we stand against God and thwart His purpose, we turn our backs on our own highest good, on the loving Father who alone can take the broken threads of our life and reunite them, who can take the tangled web of life and weave it into His great purpose.

[1] Romans viii. 28, in the Revised Version, may be read, "God worketh all things with them for good."

Could you accept this as a working philosophy of suffering? Your real problem will be not with outward events, but in your own inward attitude to them. "Duties are ours, events are God's." The chief question is whether your life is in harmony with, or in rebellion against, the ultimate power of the universe. If you are among "them that love God," all things are yours. The stars in their courses fight for you. Every wind that blows can only fill your sails. If you are wrong with God, you are out of harmony with the ultimate power of the universe. It is not that all *things* work against you, but that you stand against your own highest good, and against the only One who can work together into good all the ills of life.

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THE SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF THE WAR

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THE SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF THE WAR

WHAT then shall we say as we face the dark mystery of death? What is our hope for the young lives cut off, with all their promise unfulfilled? What is to be our answer to the men crippled and maimed by the war, and to the sorrowing ones at home who are left to tread the long pathway alone? What is our answer to those who are staggered and stumbled by the war, who have to face the aftermath of poverty and destitution, ruined cities and devastated homes, who have to rebuild the waste places and to suffer because others have sinned?

First of all, what answer have we to the problem of death? Has death any possible ministry to life? Even if we subtract death from human life, would the mere indefinite continuance of life as it is be fully and finally satisfying? Mere physical ex-

istence had but little meaning until death came as life's great teacher. Life as one long happy holiday, without gravity or greatness, without strife or sorrow, would be as insipid as some of our pictures of harps and golden streets. When death entered life, time, as Dr. Fairbairn shows, took on new value. The limits set to life drove man's thought out to eternity. In the face of death and the possibility of loss, all the relations of life have been touched with new tenderness. As Wallace says: "without death and reproduction, there could be no progress or development of the organic world."

Death has been a great teacher of life: it shows us which are the things that really matter and that abide. For death is but the portal into the larger life. Seen only in the lingering shadows of its earthly side, we call it death. But seen in the light of eternity, its true name is "Life." Eternity is not merely the endless continuance of time, it is the absence of time; it is the timeless life freed from the cramping limitations, the evils and sufferings of a world still marred by sin.

Death spells separation and loneliness for the heart that is left sorrowing here. But that very loneliness may be the condition not only of a fuller

fellowship with God in this life, but the preparation for the reunion in a larger and infinitely happier life with those whom we shall meet again, when

> " With the morn those angel faces smile,
> Which we have loved long since and lost awhile."

Death seems to strike a blow at the very heart of love. But suffering and death are not too great a price to pay if they can teach us the first and central lesson of love, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Our little human loves lead us up to the great love of God. They are but broken lights from Him, the source of all love.

In this imperfect and sinful world, human love is often carnal, selfish and isolated. Sometimes it must be purged of its dross in the fire of affliction, that the eternal gold may endure. Sometimes it must be broken that it may be reunited in a larger life. Sometimes we must learn in the absence of the human love to put God first and love Him best.

But in the great life of God no human love will be lost that springs from Him. The crawling caterpillar, and the chrysalis of seeming death are the promise of life that shall spread its wings in the sunshine of eternal day. Every marriage that was " made in heaven," every high and holy love that

had its source in God, whether we knew it or not, every broken human relationship and every severed tie that had its roots in the spiritual, every love that was noble and uplifting, is eternal and we shall meet the loved one again.

But does not our very loneliness and longing, and possibly in some cases our bitterness and rebellion, show us that we have need to learn the lesson of love again, and that our love must begin with God Himself? Perfect love casteth out fear: it will also cast out bitterness and hate, even the hatred of enemies.

Love is the solvent of suffering; and suffering is the refining fire for the purifying of love. Sometimes we must be shipwrecked upon the supernatural, we must be thrown upon God, we must lose the temporal, that we may find the eternal. And we are sure that if we have ever loved in truth, we shall love for eternity.

> "They sin who tell us Love can die. . . .
> For Love is indestructible;
> Its holy flame forever burneth.
> From Heaven it came, to Heaven returneth.
> Too oft on earth a troubled guest,
> At times deceived, at times oppressed,
> It here is tried and purified,
> Then hath in Heaven its perfect rest;
> It soweth here with toil and care,
> But the harvest-time of Love is there."

And what of the young lives cut off, their promise unfulfilled? What of the light that has gone out from many a home and the hope from many a heart? What of the boys who will never now come home?

Surely we may find the answer in that life which was cut short, with its hopes still unfulfilled, with less than three years of public ministry. He left no book, no written word, no formal organization. His was a life that seemed to end in the defeat of meaningless death. But for Him who conquered it, death was only the portal to larger life, and the grave the promise of the resurrection. In the light of His victory, we may see our loved ones who have gone on before. "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

No bullet can stay a young life which is immortal. Read the words of "A Young Soldier of France,"[1] cut down, at the age of nineteen, in his first charge, as he voices what lay inarticulate and unexpressed in the hearts of so many who fell. Perhaps you can hear *another* speaking in his words. "I saw my duty and gave in my name at once. . . . I volunteered of course. . . . I know with an unalterable knowledge

[1] "A Young Soldier of France: Letters of A. E. Casalis." Baskerville Press, Eastbourne.

and with an unconquerable confidence that the foundation of my faith is unshakable, it rests upon the Rock. For the rest then, what matters? Everything by degrees will become clear and full of light. . . . I shall fight with a good conscience and without fear, I hope, certainly without hate. I feel myself filled with an illimitable hope. You have no idea of the peace in which I live. . . . On the march I sing inwardly. I listen to the music that is slumbering inside me. . . . The Master's call is always ringing louder in my ears. . . . I am not afraid of death. I have made the sacrifice of my life. I know that to die is to begin to live."

The last lines of an unfinished letter found in his pocket were, "The attack cannot but succeed. There will be killed and wounded, but we shall go forward and go far. . . ." Ah, yes, they have indeed gone forward and gone far, farther than they dreamed. And the closing words of his will, found on his body, were, "'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith.' And I would that all my friends, all those who are living every moment with me, and whose hearts beat in unison with mine, should repeat the words of our hope: 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'"

And what shall we say to those who are lonely and bear this cross which sometimes is the heaviest of all? It is hard because you seem to be alone. But you are not alone. There is One who stands beside you, who walks with you and who understands. And here again, suffering may lead us to one of the great secrets of life. No human love in its beginning is perfect. It must find itself in Christ to be completed. We must learn that "this is life, to know God." We must learn that God alone can satisfy; and when we have learned to love Him, all our human love will be given back to us enriched in His perfect love. It is quite possible for a human love to become our idol. Anything is an idol which takes the place of God or shuts Him out of the first place in our hearts.

What is it that is the joy of heaven and the ultimate satisfaction of life? It is not golden streets or the playing of harps or a changed environment, or the mere absence of sin—it is God Himself. He is our life. He and He alone can satisfy. Alone and weary, forgetful of His own thirst, Christ sits by that woman at the well and tells her, and tells us, the central secret of life: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in

him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

Dear friend, will you pardon the personal word of a fellow sufferer? Nineteen years ago came the darkest day of the writer's life. In bitterness, in rebellion, in discouragement, he cried out to know the meaning of life. And as to Hagar, perishing of thirst in the wilderness, God showed a fountain of living water to quench her thirst, so He showed that day to a weary pilgrim the fountain of life in those words uttered to the woman at the well: "Whosoever drinketh shall never thirst." And for nineteen years He has kept His promise. For nineteen years there has not been an hour of darkness, of depression or discouragement.

> "Yes! in me, in me He dwelleth,
> I in Him, and He in me!
> And my empty soul He filleth,
> Here and through eternity."

We are never satisfied with ourselves or our attainments. We must ever hunger and thirst after righteousness. We have never attained in character, but we may know every day, even in weakness, in loneliness or in suffering, the great secret of heaven—that *He satisfies*. And so long as one continues to drink—that is, to take life from Him, hour by hour and day by day—so long he shall never thirst.

" The face of all the world is changed I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of Thy soul
Move still, oh still beside me as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink
And praise its sweetness ; sweet with Thee a-near.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where Thou art, or shalt be, there or here."

Dear friend, have you ever really yielded your life to Him ? Have you ever laid the sorrow of your broken life at His feet, taken up your cross, accepted your suffering, and followed Him ? Could you not, will you not give your life to Him ?

Or, to take another problem, what shall we say when the boys come home crippled and maimed, with the loss of a hand or a foot, or with eyesight or health gone ? Once again, may we not remember that we march in a great succession of suffering ? Think of the men who have overcome in spite of weakness. You do not suffer alone. It is estimated that one-tenth of the world's population have to bear the handicap of some affliction.

Like the apostle Paul we may cry, and naturally have a right to cry, that it may depart from us. But the answer comes : " My grace is sufficient for thee : for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Coleridge claimed that the three greatest works of the nineteen centuries were all written by men of feeble health: Spinoza's "Ethics," Bacon's "Novum Organum," and "The Critique of Pure Reason." Bacon struggled with ill health, John Kepler was feeble. Sir Isaac Newton was a most unpromising child, with a frail body and poor eyesight. He showed no aptitude for study, and was first incited by the desire to get ahead of a boy who kicked him. He became in time the first scholar of his class and the first scientist of his century. Alexander Pope was a confirmed invalid with a crooked form who found life one long disease.

Voltaire was physically weak, yet he left us seventy volumes as the fruit of more than eighty years of suffering. He spent months in bed, often at the point of death; he was twice in prison, nearly always sick, and laboured on as an invalid with one eye; yet he buried nearly all his doctors. Physically weak, he fought the battle of the socially weak. The great Pascal never passed a day after his eighteenth year without suffering. Pasteur laboured for twenty-seven years after his paralytic stroke early in life and achieved the great discoveries in science, which, according to Huxley, saved France more than the total indemnity of the Franco-Prussian

war. Victor Hugo was a child "colourless, sightless, voiceless and so poor a weakling that all despaired of him"; yet for over eighty years he grandly triumphed over life.

Edison was so stupid that he was the despair of his teachers. Only his mother's faith kept him true. Nelson, in early life almost a physical wreck and tempted to utter discouragement, said fiercely: "I will be a hero, and confiding in Providence, I will brave every danger." After he had lost his right eye and his right arm, he said: "I have yet my legs and one arm!" And there on the great shaft in Trafalgar Square, which rises like the pivot of the British Empire, in token of the freedom of the seas, stands the memorial of a man who won the greatest battle in naval warfare, despite frail health and a crippled body. Thus may you win your battle with yourself.

Milton deliberately gave his eyesight to the service of his country. "Paradise Lost" was written chiefly at night, dictated in blindness, in the midst of an unhappy home. Henry Fawcett learned to "convert all impediments into instruments, all enemies into power." Suddenly blinded for life by an accident, he decided to stick to his purpose to enter Parliament. Overcoming great difficulties, he became Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge,

and finally Postmaster-General of England. At one time his popularity was said to be second only to that of Gladstone.

The great historian William Prescott in youth was suddenly blinded in one eye and almost completely lost the sight of the second also, yet " he sang aloud in his darkness and solitude with unabated cheer." With unconquerable will, he resolved to master the ancient languages necessary for his research in historical lines. Several hundred volumes in foreign languages had to be consulted or read. For forty years he triumphed over his blindness. He completed at last his " Conquest of Peru " and " Conquest of Mexico," but his greatest work was never written, but lived. It was the conquest of himself.

Many will return disfigured by the war, but let us remember Him whose " visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. . . . As a root out of a dry ground : He hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief : and we hid as it were our faces from Him ; He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows."

Ah, friend, crippled or maimed or blinded or sick, the end of life is not a whole body, but a whole soul. Our outward man is decaying, but our inward man is renewed day by day. The lesson of life is learned in weakness, but its end is strength ; it is learned in pain, but its end is power ; it is sown in suffering, but reaped in joy. Do not be afraid to suffer and do not be afraid to die.

Oh, death, thou art a conquered foe ! Oh, suffering, thou art my friend ! Oh, life, I greet thee, with all thou dost bring of joy or pain ! God is my Father, Christ is my Friend, pain is my teacher : but life is my end. What then have I to fear in earth or heaven, in life or death, time or eternity ?[1]

[1] Let us cry with the great apostle of suffering : " What then shall we say to these things ? If God is for us, who is against us ? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things ? For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

" Seeing then we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, of the suffering ones of all ages, let us lay aside every weight or burden, care or doubt, and the sin of unbelief and discouragement, which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us ; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher, the captain and file leader, of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of God." See Romans viii. 26–39 ; Hebrews xi. 32–40 and xii. 1–13, 27–39.

For the answer, then, to the problem of suffering, as we face the mystery of death, the loneliness of life, the unfulfilled promise of youth cut short in its prime, the hardships and handicaps of the crippled, the sick and the suffering, in war or peace—for the answer to these and other problems, we can only turn back again to the one key that fits the lock of the mystery of human suffering, and find our answer in the fact of Christ and Him crucified. He triumphed in weakness and overcame in suffering. He conquered death. He found fellowship in loneliness. His life was cut short, yet He rose triumphant with the life eternal, which He shares with us.

VI

CONCLUSION: THE GLORY OF SUFFERING

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CONCLUSION: THE GLORY OF SUFFERING

WE have seen in the foregoing pages that suffering is an undeniable fact. We have tried to show that there is a possible purpose in suffering—as discipline, as the result of sin, as vicariously borne for man's glory, or removable for man's good. We have seen that all these results are actually realized in human experience when suffering has been accepted and borne in the right spirit. We have tried to show that there is no adequate rational philosophy of suffering, but there is a Christian answer to the problem.

If Christ needed to be made perfect through suffering, we also need its softening discipline. If He through suffering served and saved others, we also may share in His work of sacrifice and service. Instead of nursing our suffering in secret and letting it consume our hearts in bitterness, we may go out in sympathy and in loving service to minister to

all who are in need. In serving the poor and needy of earth, we shall be serving Him who said: "I was hungry, and ye gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me."

But now we have reached the crux of the whole matter, and here is the parting of the ways. *All depends on how you take your suffering.* It depends upon you as to whether it shall make or break you, sweeten or embitter you, soften or harden you. God sends His sun to shine upon the evil and the good: but the same sun that softens the wax, hardens the earth. God sends His rain upon the just and the unjust: but the same rain that softens the furrow, cakes the clay, so that no blade of corn may break through.

The galley slave toils dumbly at the oar; the athlete in the 'varsity eight strains joyously for victory and the winning crew. Come soon or late, each completed life must labour at the oar of human suffering. Ah, fellow-toiler in the deep, for thine own sake, for thy Father's sake, who meant thee to win in the race of life, be thine not the blind toil of the hopeless galley slave,

but the joyous striving of the athlete of a winning crew. Thou art no slave, but a free-born son of God. Thy Father's heart doth yearn for thee; thy Master's heart once broke for thee. Thou art not slave, but free!

Does thy cross seem heavy or unjust? Turn back for a moment to Him who stood before that first rude cross. It was not just or right. He had not deserved the loneliness and shame. He had not merited such suffering and death. What a cup of mingled grief it was—the treachery of Judas, the betrayal of His friends, the cursing and denial of His boldest disciple, the scorn of Pilate, the driving of nails that tore His quivering flesh, the bitterness of human sin, the awfulness of such a death: all this was mingled in that cup for Him. And yet, even so, it was not the cup of Judas or of the enemies' hate, but "the cup which My Father hath given Me." If He could see His Father's hand even in *that* suffering, can you not in yours?

They constrained one named Simon to bear the cross. To him it was a meaningless burden. He was probably driven by force. He may have resented it and received no blessing from it at the time. Yet, how different was Christ's attitude to

that same cross, which held so much more of woe for Him than for Simon. Though he fell beneath its weight, he stretched out His hands to take it. It was a hard wooden circumstance of fate, man-made but God-appointed, caused by sin but permitted by love. He accepted it and bore it even to the laying down of His life.

Oh, friend and fellow-mourner, which is your attitude to the burden of suffering? Like Simon, are you struggling blindly beneath its burden, bitter at its weight, seeing nothing of its meaning, receiving nothing of its blessing? Or, like your Lord, have you courageously accepted it? For your own sake, may you take up your cross and follow Him; for though it lead you to Calvary, beyond is the brightness of the resurrection morning.

It seemed an unjust cross to Simon, when compelled to bear it against his will. But as we read the old record again of "Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus," we find perhaps a suggestion that these were Christians and known to the leaders of that day. Perhaps it was the same Rufus mentioned by St. Paul: "Salute Rufus, chosen of the Lord." And perhaps long afterward Simon found the meaning of that cross,

which at the time was so meaningless and hard to bear.

As we have said, all depends upon our attitude to suffering, upon how we take it. Rebellion rends our own soul and leaves us in bitterness, vainly striving against what we cannot change. Dumb acquiescence leaves us with the heavy weight of our cross and its lesson unlearned. The full surrender of acceptance throws open the gates of new life for thee, and the light of joy, of life, of love, will break through upon thy clouded pathway.

Does all the world seem dark now? It is the same world that seemed so joyous once. And even now the sun is shining, the birds are singing, new loves are finding its beauties afresh this very day. It is not that the world is dark, only that you are a little farther along on the pathway of life. "The best is yet to be." Remind yourself that the world is not dark, even though your spectacles may be. Sorrow is so often temperamental or a matter of physical depression; do not let it master you. Say to yourself, in the words of the Oriental proverb, "This too shall pass away." It lasts but for a day. Stay yourself upon the truth, and repeat it, that all suffering is temporary. "There's a silver lining through the dark cloud shining."

Then turn the dark cloud inside out, and show the lining. Beyond all clouds, the sun is always shining ; it will shine again for you. It is shining even now if you can but see it.

Two men came back from Flanders. The one said that he had lost his faith there. The other said : " All the faith I have, came to me up the line in Flanders." One man breaks into profanity and obscenity in the trenches, but another writes back : " I feel as if I were in some great cathedral, with the presence of God all around me."

The Bishop of London tells of a beautiful child of thirteen, who when told by the doctor that she must lie upon her back for two years or more as the only chance of getting well, said, upon hearing this hard sentence : " It is an honour, Bishop, to share God's pain." Thus all who accept their suffering from Him are His fellow cross-bearers, called to be His very bodyguard, to be those that stand with Him in suffering and in joy.

Suffering is a sacrament, like the *sacramentum* or oath of loyalty of the Roman soldier of old. Let us pledge our loyalty in suffering to Him who calls us in such tender pity and with such utter compassion and understanding, " Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give

you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." " If any man would come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me."

Ah, friend, thy cross, which seems so heavy now, is that which brings thee to God, brings thee to life, and will bring thee in time to thy absent one, whom thou " hast loved long since and lost awhile."

" Fearest sometimes that thy Father
Hath forgot ?
When the clouds around thee gather,
Doubt Him not.
Always hath He comfort spoken,
Always hath the daylight broken ;
Better hath He been for years
Than thy fears !

To His own the Saviour giveth
Daily strength !
To each troubled soul that liveth,
Peace at length !
Know His love in full completeness,
Fills the measure of thy weakness ;
Ask Him not then, ' Why ? ' or ' How ? '
Trust Him now ! "

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